

Afghan Women's

Roadmap for Peace

Entering the Transformation Decade

WOMEN'S
PERSPECTIVES
SERIES

July 2015

Supported by
Berghof Foundation



EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy would first and foremost like to express their gratitude to all of the attendees and panellists of the *Afghan Women's Roadmap for Peace Entering the Transformation Decade* conference in Kabul, whose opinions, examples, quotations and speeches have formed the basis of this report.

EPD would also like to offer their thanks to The Berghof Foundation for providing the funding and support for this initiative, in particular Janel B. Galvanek.

Additionally, our thanks go to Marie S. Huber for her invaluable feedback and contributions to this project. We would also like to thank the various external stakeholders who provided input and comments before the final areas of concern were agreed, and Dr Pam Green for compiling the data and producing the final report.

Executive Summary 03

Introduction 04

The Evolving Role of Women in Afghanistan 05

Women and Gender in the Peace Process 07

Roadmaps and Relevance 08

Conference Overview, Including Challenges and Lessons Learned 09

Methodology of the Ten Key Areas of Concern 12

Afghan Women's Ten Key Areas of Concern for Working Towards Peace in the Transformation Decade 13

Next Steps 17

References 19

Executive Summary

In May 2015, 150 women and men attended a national conference in Kabul, held by EPD, to discuss the role of women in the peace process as Afghanistan enters the transformation decade.

Acknowledging the evolving status of women since the fall of the Taliban, and the existing national and local peacebuilding mechanisms, the conference offered an opportunity for dialogue between national and provincial actors, civil society and government, young and old, providing a platform where they could share their experiences, opinions and perspectives with each other.

A panel discussion featuring both national and international representatives also presented the chance for the participants to not only hear the views of peace process leaders, but to engage with them and receive answers to their questions and concerns. This report summarizes the key points and issues raised, with particular emphasis on the actual words of the participants and panellists.

In the final group discussion session of the conference the participants developed their own ‘roadmaps’ for how women could be involved in the peace process. These were then collated into a combined ten-point list, which recognises the significance of, and potential for, women’s involvement in the following key areas:

- 1) *Support and encourage stronger education for both youth and women*
- 2) *Promote women’s rights, and the involvement of women at all levels of society*
- 3) *Encourage economic and social development*
- 4) *Acknowledge the importance of, and support, justice and good governance*
- 5) *Inspire, and advocate for, an inclusive peace process at all levels of society*
- 6) *Advocate for more women to be involved in formal peace talks and structures*
- 7) *Promote community and public engagement, and tackle corruption, impunity and injustice*
- 8) *Understand the effects of opposition groups, narcotics and human trafficking, and raise awareness at the family and community levels*
- 9) *Realize the importance of religion within all aspects of the culture of Afghanistan, and build alliances with religious leaders*
- 10) *Advocate for the protection of human rights, and address gender, social, legal and cultural discrimination*

The purpose was for the participants to identify the areas they felt were of the greatest importance for Afghan women to engage with and monitor in the pursuit of sustainable change and, ultimately, a stable and economically viable country. Subsequently, the key recommendation of this ‘roadmap’ to external parties is to support the women of Afghanistan as they embark upon their journey.

Introduction

From the 11th to 13th May 2015, 150 women and men, representing the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the High Peace Council, youth activists, and civil society actors from all 34 provinces, gathered in Kabul to participate in EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy's national conference on the role of women in the peace process. This conference, supported by The Berghof Foundation, included presentations, a documentary screening, a panel discussion featuring national and international representatives, as well as several group sessions to share ideas, perspectives and experiences on the past and future role of women in Afghanistan's peacebuilding process.

This initiative represented a Track 2 (an unofficial problem-solving activity involving NGO leaders and civil society actors, with the aim of building relationships and encouraging new thinking in official processes) national dialogue that offered the opportunity for previous Track 1 (official high-level political and military discussions focused on peace talks, treaties and ceasefires) initiatives to be advanced, enabled an unofficial discussion at the civil

society level, and utilized practical problem-solving activities. The aim was to build relationships and encourage new thinking that could ultimately both inform official policies and processes, and support community mobilization.

The eventual goal of the dialogue was to extend participation beyond political elites and allow diverse interests to influence future negotiations, with special attention paid to ensuring women's voices and concerns were present in an attempt to rectify their previous marginalization.

The final group session during the conference resulted in the participants developing their own 'roadmaps', requested to be as actionable and accountable as possible, for how women can be actively and practically involved at all levels of the peace process. These were then analyzed for recurrent themes, collated, and formulated into a ten-point list of key areas of concern. All of these views, opinions and quotes have been incorporated into this report, the *Afghan Women's Roadmap for Peace Entering the Transformation Decade*.



The Evolving Role of Women in Afghanistan

After the Taliban's systematic attempts to prevent women from holding significant positions in education, employment, and public life, considerable progress has been made within Afghanistan; not only towards establishing democratic order and securing rights and roles for women, but also in acknowledging that the involvement of women is essential if sustainable peace is to be achieved.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in 2003, and the following year equal rights for all citizens, both male and female, were enshrined in the constitution. At least 27% of the lower parliament house (Wolesi Jirga), and 16% of seats in the upper house (Meshrano Jirga), are constitutionally reserved for women (ICG, 2013).

Under 2008's Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) gender was a cross-cutting strategy, with the ten-year National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), released the same year, also pledging the government's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, including a minimum of 30% female civil service employees by 2018 (the current figure being 24%).

'So many things have now been done, like establishing the parliament, provincial councils, presidential and parliamentary elections, so these are the steps towards improvement for people of Afghanistan. People in Afghanistan now have the right to be a candidate and also to vote for someone, so these have a positive impact on our country's development and improvement.'

Male civil society activist, Panjshir



In the 2009 Electoral Laws, a quota system guaranteed a minimum of 25% female members in Provincial Councils, although the parliament passed legislation to reduce the quota to 20% in 2013. Over the past decade women have increasingly carved out a role in the traditionally all-male Loya Jirga, although only 400 of the 2500 delegates in 2013 were women. Women currently account for 21% of Provincial Council members, and 35% of Community Development Council (CDC) members (Huber, 2015).

'One of the biggest challenges we had in this process is that men are given more priority and influence than women and it is a male dominated environment. Men feel that women are weak and cannot take any responsibility.'

Female civil society activist, Samangan

While the number of female police officers, judges, prosecutors and lawyers has significantly increased over the past decade, they still remain very much in the minority. There were 1,441 women in the Afghan National Police in 2013, compared to 180 in 2005, although this still represented less than 2%. Women also compose less than 0.5% of the Afghan National Army (Huber, 2015), and only 8.4% of judges, 6% of prosecutors and 19.3% of lawyers (IDLO, 2014).

The 2009 Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law criminalizes 22 offenses against women, including discriminatory traditions and customs. Additionally, the expanding number of women's shelters and Family Response Units (FRUs) provides women with the potential for increased support and safety.

There have also been considerable advances over the past decade in girls enrolling in school, attending university, women starting their own businesses, and the maternal mortality rate, while still very high, has been substantially reduced. The turnout of female voters in the first round of the 2014 presidential elections was 36%, the highest in Afghanistan's history (Huber, 2015).

However, women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by violence and insecurity. The number of female civilian casualties continues to increase (up 61% since 2013), gender

"Women have limited opportunities. More than half of voters are women, but it is always forgotten. Now we have four female ministers but only being a minister is not enough; women have many other leadership abilities and can work in many other positions as well."

Female NGO health advisor, Kabul

equality policies and laws are ignored in practice, and women in positions of authority and prominence are treated as emblematic and/or live under the constant threat of violence and harassment.

Women-led local Community Development Councils (CDCs), established through the National Solidarity Program, are rarely regarded as more than symbolic (ICG, 2013). Few prosecutions under the EVAW law actually reach the courts, and women attempting to report such issues run a high risk of being arrested and imprisoned themselves for 'moral crimes' (HRW, 2013). Girls' education remains inconsistent and of low quality, with schools the frequent target of insurgent attacks (Nijssen, 2012), and female teachers and civil servants often facing harassment.

The gradual depletion of employment opportunities for both women and men continues to present considerable problems. For example, many aid programs have ceased or reduced their operations, due both to the transition and decreased funding of aid from international donors, and a high level of local auxiliary businesses that emerged since 2001 have folded following the departure of international security forces.



Women and Gender in the Peace Process

Launched in 2010, the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Process (APRP) (following on from the 2001 Bonn Agreement and the Afghan New Beginnings Programme) works towards the joint goals of negotiating and reconciling senior-level commanders with the government, and reintegrating Taliban and Armed Opposition Group (AOG) members into peaceful civilian society; the overarching aim being the support of national solidarity, democratization, security, and economic development (PTRO, 2014). The APRP involves outreach, negotiation, demobilization and the consolidation of peace; it is overseen at the national level by the High Peace Council (HPC), and at the local level by Provincial Peace Councils (PPCs).

While the APRP has a gender mainstreaming policy that identifies issues such as poor information between the local and national levels, a lack of gender-specific monitoring and evaluation, an insufficient presence of women within the APRP, and a limited understanding by civil society women of the APRP itself, the terms of the policy are vague in relation to firm stipulations and requirements.

'As all people have witnessed, in the last decade nothing has been done in the peace process. We have a peace council that still has only a symbolic role, and they have only reintegrated a small number of people; it has done nothing effective and beneficial for the country and people. They had discussion with the Taliban and Pakistan several times but it didn't have any result. When a peace council is established it should work according to the people's needs.'

Male NGO legal advisor, Kabul

The HPC released their Peace Process Roadmap to 2015 in 2012, and outlined a plan in which all foreign troops would leave the country by 2015, with all opposition groups engaging in peace talks and ultimately becoming active participants of the constitutional and political processes.

'All HPC members have good coordination and collaboration among themselves, and mostly they use their personal facilities and networks to try their best to talk with the Taliban. HPC also try to solve tribal and local disputes, which has a positive impact on people.'

Female HPC member, Faryab

Roadmap 2015 was drafted without consultation with the Afghan public, and has been criticized for, amongst other concerns, having too strong a concentration on the Taliban, its focus on relations with Pakistan, and for suggesting an unrealistic timescale (Huber, 2015). Additionally, it also failed to address women's issues (with only a single reference to women and no mention of gender mainstreaming), the implications of implied potential concessions to the Taliban and other groups that do not fully support women's rights and freedoms, or the importance of women's perspectives in the reconciliation and peace processes (Partis-Jennings & Huber, 2014).

Gender-sensitive frameworks continue to be lacking at all levels of Afghanistan's peace process. At the national level, the President personally appointed all seventy HPC members, but only nine are female. There have also, to date, been limited efforts to address the needs of women in relation

to reconciliation, or national-level efforts by the government to consult women on national peace processes. This lack of transparency and public outreach has resulted in a notable disconnect between the views of Afghan civil society and the government's peace efforts (Partis-Jennings & Huber, 2014).

At the local level, while there is a formal quota of 3 to 5 women per PPC, and an overall target of 50% women's participation, in practice the total membership consists of one member being allocated per district, resulting in women's engagement being mixed. Activities involving women have mostly been focused on household concerns, mediation and peacebuilding, often in women-only spaces rather than wider community decision-making bodies and male-dominated leadership structures. Patriarchal local-level peace and dispute resolution bodies, headed by religious and traditional leaders, continue to have a poor record in relation to women's inclusion and gender-based discrimination (Huber, 2015).



ROADMAPS AND RELEVANCE

'Roadmap' is an often-mentioned term in relation to Afghanistan, applied to both the peace process and associated issues. Although the most obvious example is probably the 2012 High Peace Council's *Afghan Peace Process Roadmap to 2015*, additional publications include the 2001 Council on Foreign Relations' *A Roadmap for Afghanistan*, CARE Canada/Peacebuilding's 2012 *Afghanistan: Pathways to Peace*, the 2014 collaboration between 11 civil society organisations and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission entitled *Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace: Building the Foundations for an Inclusive Peace Process - Local Road Maps for Peace*, as well as associated examples such as the United Nations' *Road Map Towards Compliance*, addressing children and armed conflict, which was endorsed by the government of Afghanistan in 2014.

EPD is also involved, alongside the other members of the Salah Consortium¹, in a further project called *Roadmap to Peace*, which will produce an additional 'roadmap' publication towards the end of 2015.

This 'roadmap' thus represents a stage in an evolving journey, but one that places the concerns and feedback of women at the forefront. The identified key areas for monitoring and engagement are entirely based on the combined, and subjective, feedback and quotes provided by the national and provincial participants of the conference.



'We have learned many lessons about women's involvement in peace processes from other countries, but we should try to have lessons learned from our own Afghan society... when we talk about a process it is not a revolution that will happen at once. For the process to progress and finish, we need more patience.'

Hossai Wardak, Director of the First Lady's Office

¹Salah is a consortium of eight Afghan NGOs established in 2011, with the objective of constructively contributing to a bottom-up peacebuilding and good governance process in Afghanistan.

Conference Overview

Including Challenges and Lessons Learned

Following introductory speeches from EPD and Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), and presentations from the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and The Liaison Office (TLO), the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, about the essential role that women played in the peace process in Liberia, was screened in a version dubbed into Dari.

The participants then divided into groups for three discussion sessions, the results of which were presented back to all attendees. The first session

'All people in Afghanistan want peace, but we want a peace that accepts the role and respects the rights of women. A peace that does not accept those is not acceptable to me as a woman, or to any Afghan.'

*Fatima Gailani,
President of the Afghan Red Crescent Society*

'Peace process discussions have been behind locked doors, and the role of women has been very small. Women are greatly affected by war but we have not seen their presence in the peace process. There are very few women and their presence is symbolic.'

Female civil society activist, Parwan

'I would recommend that women's role should not be symbolic in the peace process, and they should have authority and roles in decision-making as well. Women are half of our society, so they can have a very beneficial role.'

Female civil society youth activist, Kabul

looked at the involvement of women in the peace process from a macro perspective. The participants were asked to share their knowledge and perspectives on the successes and failures of formal and informal peace mechanisms of the past decade, including the HPC and its structure, capacity-building and training initiatives for women, current drivers of conflict, and the status that women have held within the peace process so far.

The second session was designed to gather grassroots (micro) perspectives, with the participants invited to elaborate on their direct experiences and views of how the peace process has been enacted within their own communities and networks, including their particular personal challenges, achievements, opportunities, lessons learned, and their future plans and expectations.

In the third and final group session the participants were invited to draft their own 'roadmaps' for women throughout the transformation decade, with a particular emphasis on actions that could be directly undertaken by Afghan women themselves, rather than just unrealistic rhetoric or recommendations for external parties.

'The peace process is good in Afghanistan; we have learned many things from lack of peace, we have made many sacrifices. Women need to be supported by their families, because if a woman is not supported by her family she cannot do anything. If someone tells me to participate in the peace process but I face violence from my family, then I cannot be involved. Families must support women, because a woman can stop her son from violence or war.'

Female civil society activist, Herat

Although the groups were divided based on their primary sphere of interaction, there was a high level of consistency in many of the opinions that were expressed. For example, all groups considered the key drivers of conflict at a macro level to be poverty, illiteracy and foreign intervention, with lack of law enforcement and unemployment mentioned by all except one group. All groups expressed that the status of women in the peace process has been advanced by their active participation, unification and coordination with wider society. Every group felt that women's challenges in the last decade of the formal peace process have included the low level of women's participation and inclusion within the HPC, poor accountability and achievement of the HPC itself, and the lack of operational and financial efficiency in the HPC and PPCs.



'The HPC has not had any achievements yet, but the fact is that other organizations have implemented initiatives and achievements and mostly we work as volunteers. The only achievement the HPC has had is that some opposition groups were tired of war, so they would bring their weapons to the HPC. I believe this has had only a symbolic angle, and I think the peace process should be integral.'

Male civil society activist, Nangarhar

'If we think realistically, the [formal] peace process has not had any great achievements, but this process has created a mentality of peace among people. Even if there is no peace in Afghanistan, we still have a peace process, and we should struggle to bring peace and security.'

Male civil society activist, Panjshir

'There were a lot of initiatives in the past and fortunately most of them were successful. There are different projects about peace in rural and remote areas, and fortunately such projects and awareness programs have opened minds; before all the tribes did whatever they wanted, and no one was able to implement any project'.

Female youth activist, Kabul

'Awareness programs are provided through different channels which have changed people's minds, and the benefits of peace have been described to people; they are the reason people have accepted peace.'

Male NGO legal advisor, Kabul

When discussing micro perspectives, all of the groups felt that the progress of women in the peace process had been limited by security restrictions, as well as a lack of opportunities, education and respect for women, both at the community level and in relation to discriminatory traditions and practices evident throughout Afghan culture.

There was unanimous agreement that awareness-raising, capacity-building and advocacy initiatives for women have been at least partially successful in improving women's participation in both the peace process and civil society, and that such programs would continue to be important in the future to increase women's engagement, and address patriarchal and discriminatory attitudes.



On the final day a panel discussion was conducted, with speakers including the Minister of Women's Affairs, the Canadian Ambassador, a representative from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), a representative from the office of the First Lady, and the Head of the Secretariat of the High Peace Council. Throughout the presentations and Q&A, due to



'Women have suffered many things from war, and the after-effects of war such as murders, rape, prohibition from education, and many other problems in the society, including poverty. Women should involve themselves in the peace process and feel responsible because they have faced all of these problems themselves; in this way, they can step forward to change their fate, as women have the ability to play a positive role in security and peace.'

Dilbar Nazari – Minister of Women's Affairs

'If we do not have peace in our area then we face financial, social, and moral problems in the community. During the last decade we had many hopes, but we were disappointed. Now we should work harder and try to feel responsible for maintaining peace in our country. One of the outcomes and lessons learned is that women are half of society, they can have a very important role in peacebuilding. They are in direct contact with their brothers, husbands, fathers and sons, and women can direct and advise them regarding peace. We know that women's words are more effective.'

Female civil society activist, Samangan

the disproportionate level women have been affected by the conflict (civilian casualties, gender-based bias in education and employment opportunities etc.), the participation of women was repeatedly acknowledged as essential to the successful progress of the peace process.

The intention to support and include women throughout the transitional decade, as well as involving a wider section of Afghan society than has been included in previous talks and mechanisms, was affirmed by all parties. The conference concluded with the release of a statement consisting of recommendations to the government and HPC, armed opposition groups, civil society, Islamic and neighbouring countries, and the international community and donors.



'The international community can be the cause of problems, so the peace process needs to be Afghan-led. Afghanistan should be a centre of collaboration, not a centre of competition. We should clearly express our points and ensure that our programs are realistic, include lessons learned from previous engagement, and promote stability within Afghanistan. We must not ask for peace from others; it is the job of Afghans to bring peace. If we expect it of others it is impossible, we need to be actively engaged in social pressure and social justice to cause our own peace.'

*Masoom Stanikzai,
Head of the Secretariat of the High Peace Council*

Methodology of the Ten Key Areas of Concern



In the final discussion session of the conference, six different groups debated, and subsequently presented, the key concerns and ideas they felt should be included in a ‘roadmap’ for peace in the transformation decade. The groups were composed of representatives from government ministries, the High Peace Council, youth activists, and three groups of civil society actors (one group from the centre, and two with members from all 34 provinces). Summaries of key documents were available throughout the conference (including the HPC Roadmap 2015, the 2014 AIHRC/civil society *Local Road Maps for Peace*, the conclusions and recommendations included in EPD’s 2014 research on *Women, Peace and Security* etc.), so that not only could existing materials be acknowledged and developed rather than repeated, but also to offer the opportunity to identify any perceived gaps, distortions or contradictions in relation to the particular concerns and issues of women.

As the culmination of all that had been discussed throughout the conference, the participants were asked to place particular emphasis on the perspectives, rights, cultural position and aspirations of women, as well as requesting that points should, as much as possible, reflect actionable plans that

participants (and their organisations, networks, communities etc.) could follow and be held accountable to. Each group then presented their ideas and suggestions back to all participants for questions and comments.

The various points raised in these final presentations were recorded and mapped into a matrix, which was then analyzed to determine the recurrent themes, suggestions, and areas of concern. To be included in what subsequently evolved into a list of ten key themes, it was necessary for a point to have been raised by a minimum of three groups (50%), although all except one point was included by four or more. The ten key areas of concern were then arranged according to how frequently each point was raised in relation to achieving sustainable peace, with the one issue that was highlighted by all groups – the importance of educational opportunities for both youth and women – included as point 1.

Every one of the included points is therefore 100% based on the feedback of a majority of conference participants, with all further explanations and descriptions based on narrative discussions emerging from a minimum of two groups. Other views that failed to make the list were still incorporated into the previous sections of this report.



Afghan Women's

Ten Key Areas of Concern for Working Towards Peace in the Transformation Decade

1) SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE STRONGER EDUCATION FOR BOTH YOUTH AND WOMEN

Education was identified as a key issue if Afghanistan is going to have a peaceful and stable future. It was proposed that women should advocate for the development of training and religious education centres, as well as literacy and vocational courses that could improve the social opportunities of both youth and women, especially in rural areas. Women can also lobby for the government to provide better quality training for teachers, and improved schools for the children of both Talib and non-Talib families. In their own homes, women can promote the value of education and working hard at school to their families.

'If one person receives training it will be transferred to a whole family and it can help us bring some changes in the society. Illiteracy and ignorance is poison for the peace process because we need to know that peace is a need, and how important it is.'

Female government representative, Badakhshan

'Women may not only have their role as a mother and wife at home, but they can have role in a society by working, because women have the capability and talent. I believe that women are capable at the same level as men... I think all women should unite and use these new opportunities and conditions to improve.'

Female NGO worker, Kabul

2) PROMOTE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY

It needs to be acknowledged, both by wider society and by individuals themselves, that women have the influence, and responsibility, within their communities to start and support peaceful change. Gender-based, ethnic, tribal, anti-Islamic and language discrimination, as well as harmful practices, should be ceased at all levels. Women can and should advocate for their rights and access to justice, including the EVAW law, at both national and local levels. Women with the necessary skills should campaign to be involved in schemes to end social problems, including corruption, narcotics and human trafficking.





3) ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

It was agreed that all members of society should support the creation of public and private job opportunities for men, women, youth, and re-integrated people, and insist that the government hire professional, competent staff. Opportunities should be made accessible without any discrimination. All members of civil society, including women, can and should demand laws that secure and protect the local and natural resources of the country.

4) ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE OF, AND SUPPORT, JUSTICE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Women can make a contribution towards achieving peace in their communities by supporting civilian policing, and lobbying for improvements to their training and recruitment processes. They can also advocate for greater monitoring of public services by communities for the addressing and preventing of impunity, corruption and harassment.



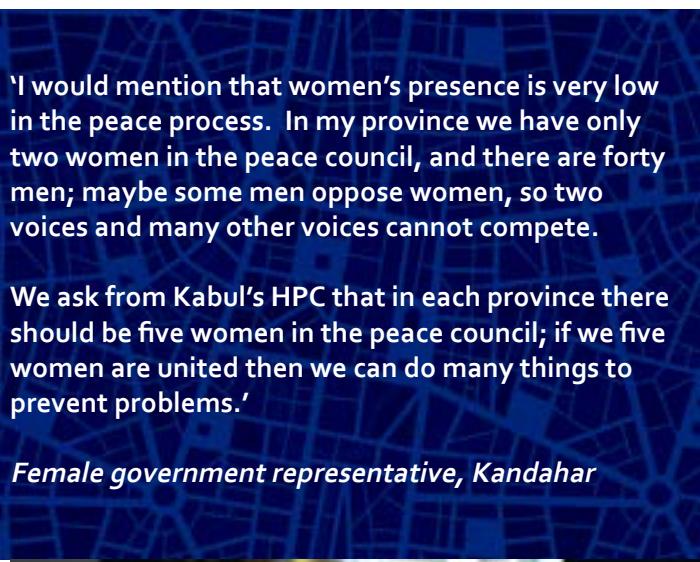
5) INSPIRE, AND ADVOCATE FOR, AN INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESS AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY

Freedom of speech and gender equality were considered to be essential rights that needed to be sought, supported and protected for all the people of Afghanistan; in homes, schools, communities, workplaces, and the government. It was felt that programs and projects, at all levels, should be based on the needs of the people rather than on centralised or international policies and recommendations, and that women could use their influence to try and ensure that the importance of this was recognised. It was acknowledged that the inclusion of families of opposition actors in the peace process and awareness-raising, especially female family members, was a strategy worth supporting. Additionally, it was voiced that youth should be acknowledged as, and take responsibility for being, the future of Afghanistan.



6) ADVOCATE FOR MORE WOMEN TO BE INVOLVED IN FORMAL PEACE TALKS AND STRUCTURES

A need to advocate for at least one woman to be included in both the central and all provincial High Peace Council committees was strongly voiced. It was also recommended that women lobby for the quota of women within peace councils to be increased, and for their positions to be equal rather than symbolic. The inclusion of informed and knowledgeable women in peace talks should be promoted by all women as essential. Additionally, all women's rights organizations should communicate to the government that it would be beneficial to employ more women in roles that address legislation and laws.



7) PROMOTE COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, AND TACKLE CORRUPTION, IMPUNITY AND INJUSTICE

Women, and all civil society actors, can and should take responsibility for advocating for, and co-developing, education, development, social and economic programs in their communities, as well as the prevention and reporting of corruption, impunity and injustice. It was also considered important that women advocate for public, private and NGO jobs to be based on ability and merit, and that all workplaces respect women as equals, ideally following a sexual harassment policy that all sectors are obliged to adhere to.

8) UNDERSTAND THE EFFECTS OF OPPOSITION GROUPS, NARCOTICS AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING, AND RAISE AWARENESS AT THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEVELS

Women should encourage community engagement and responsibility within their own homes, discouraging their family members and social contacts from joining insurgent groups. They can also lobby the government on the social and economic value of providing alternative job opportunities for youth and reintegrated people. The government should be persuaded to appreciate the value of involving competent women in government and civil society initiatives to address corruption, drug smuggling, trafficking, gun control and extortion.

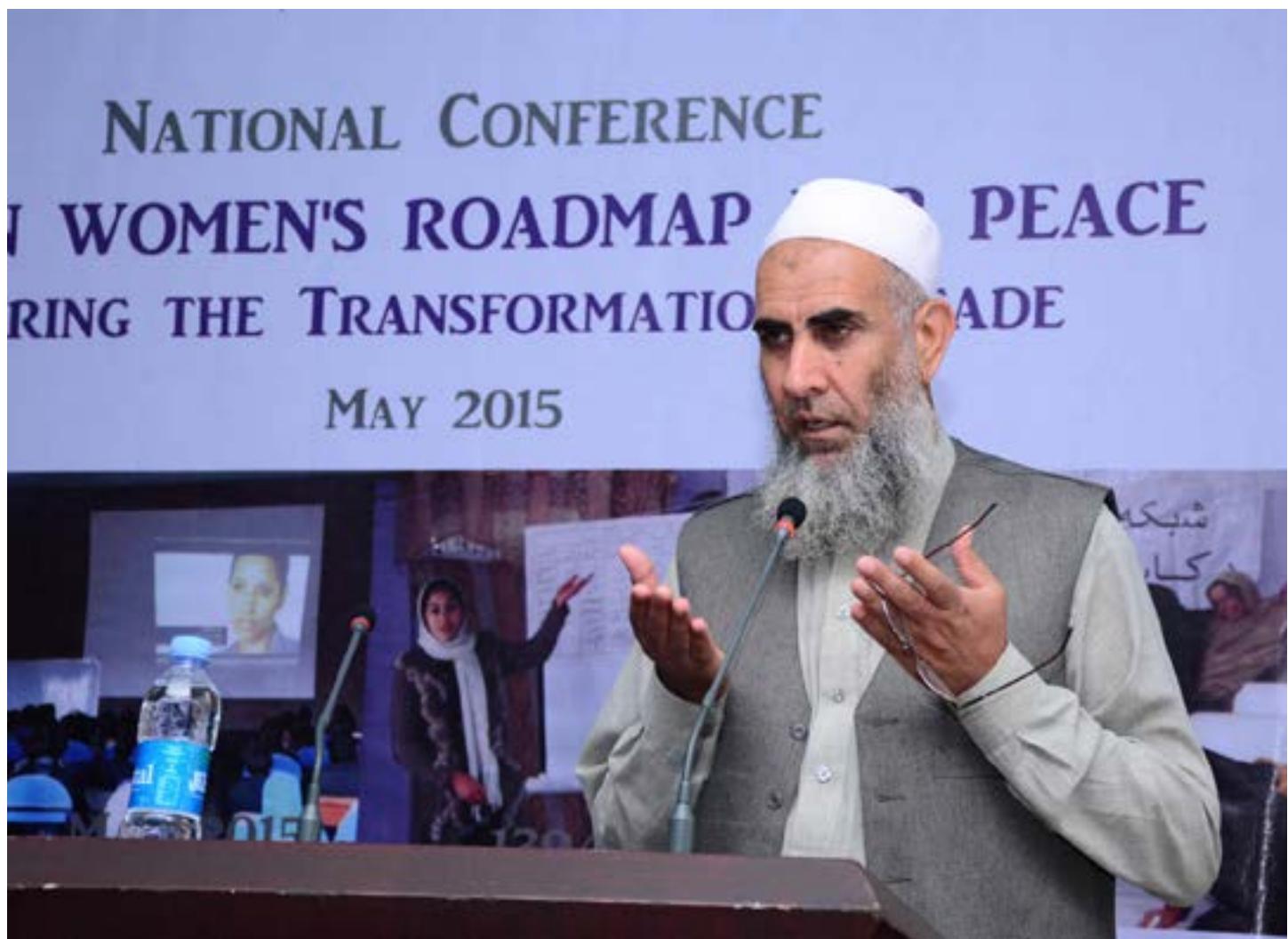


9) REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION WITHIN ALL ASPECTS OF THE CULTURE OF AFGHANISTAN, AND BUILD ALLIANCES WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Women can use their influence within communities to urge mullahs and scholars to teach only legitimate Islamic messages, not discriminatory traditions and customs which lack religious foundations or promote extremism. Religious leaders should be made aware of, and be held accountable to, the implications and risks of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions in society, and preach about the importance of national unity and peace. All members of civil society should request that religious education centres be allowed to teach female students, and support the greater presence of religious scholars in conferences, ministries, and the media.

10) ADVOCATE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ADDRESS GENDER, SOCIAL, LEGAL AND CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION

Civil society organizations, including women's groups, should take responsibility for awareness and mobilization within their communities, encouraging unity and positive progress. All organizations should practice gender equality, inclusivity, accountability and non-discriminatory behaviour in their daily lives, inspiring positive change at the grassroots level while advocating for evolution within state institutions. Women can campaign for the security, safety, legal, gender and human rights of all to be protected throughout the military, government, community and domestic levels.



Next Steps



Gathering together 150 participants, including HPC and PPC members, civil society actors, women's organisations, and youth activists from all of the provinces of Afghanistan, provided a valuable opportunity for views and opinions to be shared across geographical and thematic boundaries, for all participants to engage with national and international decision-makers, and for the foundations to be laid for future productive dialogues related to the peace process.

Although the final identified *Ten Key Areas of Concern* are not entirely new contributions to the ongoing discussions regarding the peace process (for example, eight of the final points broadly correspond with those included in the 2014 *Local Road Map for Peace* project), this conference made a valid contribution by advancing the role and visibility of all women of Afghanistan. Involving these different actors in a single platform demonstrated and confirmed that the perspectives of all Afghan women are relevant and valid, and that they all can, and should, play an important role within the peace process in the transformation decade.

While reports and publications related to the situation in Afghanistan typically end with a list of recommendations to various parties, this document serves a different purpose. Rather than demanding that external parties alter their behaviours, policies and priorities, effectively placing the responsibility for change in the hands of others and absolving individuals of their own obligations, the purpose of the conference was for the participants to identify the actions they could personally take towards the achievement of sustainable change and, ultimately, a stable and economically-viable country.



As such, the Afghan Women's Roadmap to Peace Entering the Transitional Decade, founded on the Ten Key Areas of Concern formulated by the conference participants, presents the central issues and opportunities for engagement where Afghan women themselves think that they can, and should, be involved to bring about sustainable change.

The conference, and this resulting document, provided a platform for coordination, cooperation, and engagement for the future development of these key areas of concern into concrete plans and initiatives for women's involvement in the peace process.

Subsequently, all that is recommended of others is to support Afghan women as they embark upon their journey, following the path they have outlined towards the commonly-desired destination of a peaceful Afghanistan.



'There will be no Afghanistan peace process if women are not a part of it. You have the opportunity to push this message forward. This is first and foremost an issue for you as Afghan women; you decide what direction you want to take on this. I, my fellow ambassadors, and other members of the international community, are here to support you.'

*Deborah Lyons,
Canadian Ambassador to Afghanistan*

REFERENCES

- AIHRC (2014)** Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace: Building the Foundations for an Inclusive Peace Process - Local Road Maps for Peace. Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and 11 CSOs, http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Eng_%20Report%20-%20Afghan%20Peoples%20Dialogues.pdf
- High Peace Council (2012)** The Roadmap to Peace 2015, November 2012. <http://www.afghanwarnews.info/documents/PeaceProcessRoadmap2015HighPeaceCouncilNov12.pdf>
- HRW (2013)** Afghanistan: Surge in women jailed for 'moral crimes', Human Rights Watch, 21 May 2013. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/21/afghanistan-surge-women-jailed-moral-crimes>
- Huber, M.S. (2015)** Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card: Evaluating the Government of Afghanistan's Commitments to Women and Gender Equality, EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy. <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/GERC-English.pdf>
- IDLO (2014)** Women's Professional Participation in Afghanistan's Justice Sector: Challenges and Opportunities, International Development Law Organization, http://issuu.com/idlonews/docs/idlo_afghan_report
- ICG (2013)** Women and Conflict in Afghanistan, Asia Report No. 252, International Crisis Group. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/252-women-and-conflict-in-afghanistan.pdf>
- Nijssen, S. (2012)** The Peace Process & Afghanistan's Women, Civil-Military Fusion Centre. http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/7025~v~The_Peace_Process_and_Afghanistan_s_Women_Part_II_.pdf
- Partis-Jennings, and Huber, M. S. (2014)** Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan: Looking Back to Move Forward, EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy. <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/WPS-paper.pdf>
- PTRO (2014)** The Home Front: The Role of Women in Afghanistan's Peace and Reintegration Programme, Peace Training and Research Organisation. http://www.ptro.org.af/site_files/13990989651.pdf
- The World Bank (2013)** Afghanistan: Better Outcomes for Women, Children, and the Poor: A Decade of Tremendous Progress, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2013/04/18/afghanistan-better-health-outcomes-women-children-poor>
- UNAMA (2015)** Afghanistan Annual Report 2014: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>
- Warren, Z. (2014)** Afghanistan in 2014: A Survey of the Afghan People, The Asia Foundation. <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2014final.pdf>





Traffic Square, House # 364 | Kabul Afghanistan
communications@epd-afg.org | www.epd-afg.org

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization dedicated to empowering women and youth at the community and policy levels in Afghanistan. EPD was established in early 2010 by Ms. Nargis Nehan, the Executive Director of EPD. EPD works to build the capacity of women and youth in order for them to be the front face in presenting their needs in development, peace building and democratic processes of the country. EPD further aims at mass mobilization of women and youth to contribute to overcoming the challenges of instability that Afghanistan is facing. EPD establishes platforms for women and youth to come together, establish networks, build trust and confidence, and strive jointly for transforming Afghanistan into a democratic country free of all forms of violence and discrimination.